

## **SUMMARY: EDUCATIONAL STABILITY OF FOSTER YOUTH ACT**

### **Senator Al Franken and Senator Chuck Grassley**

#### **Background**

- Children in foster care often change schools when they move between foster homes—this can have a devastating impact on their education. There are an estimated 260,000 children of school age in foster care. They often are victims of abuse or neglect, have been separated from their parents and siblings, and have been taken into the custody of the child welfare system and placed in unfamiliar new families and neighborhoods. An estimated 56 to 75 percent of them change schools when they first enter into foster care. Data show that more than one third of the 17-or-18-year-olds in foster care have experienced five or more school changes. And that is not good for their well-being. A General Accountability Office (GAO) study found that changing schools negatively affects student academic outcomes. In fact, foster youth score significantly lower than their peers on standardized tests and drop out of school at higher rates. A stable educational experience is essential for children in foster care. School may be the only stable familiar connection they have.

#### **The Educational Stability of Foster Youth Act**

This bill improves the educational stability of students in foster care by improving collaboration between child welfare agencies and state and local educational agencies. The bill requires that these six conditions are met:

- Children can remain in their original school when it is in their best interest – when they enter foster care and move from placement to placement.
- Children can immediately enroll in a new school when it is not in their best interest to remain in their original school.
- Students have prompt access to their educational records when they must change schools.
- Local educational agencies and child welfare agencies must work together to develop a process and ensure that funding for transportation is available.
- A point of contact for education of foster children is appointed in the local educational agency when there is also a point of contact in the corresponding child welfare agency.
- The bill also requires a report by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services on implementation of these new assurances for foster children, including on the progress made and remaining barriers.